

# THE GREATEST TEACHER

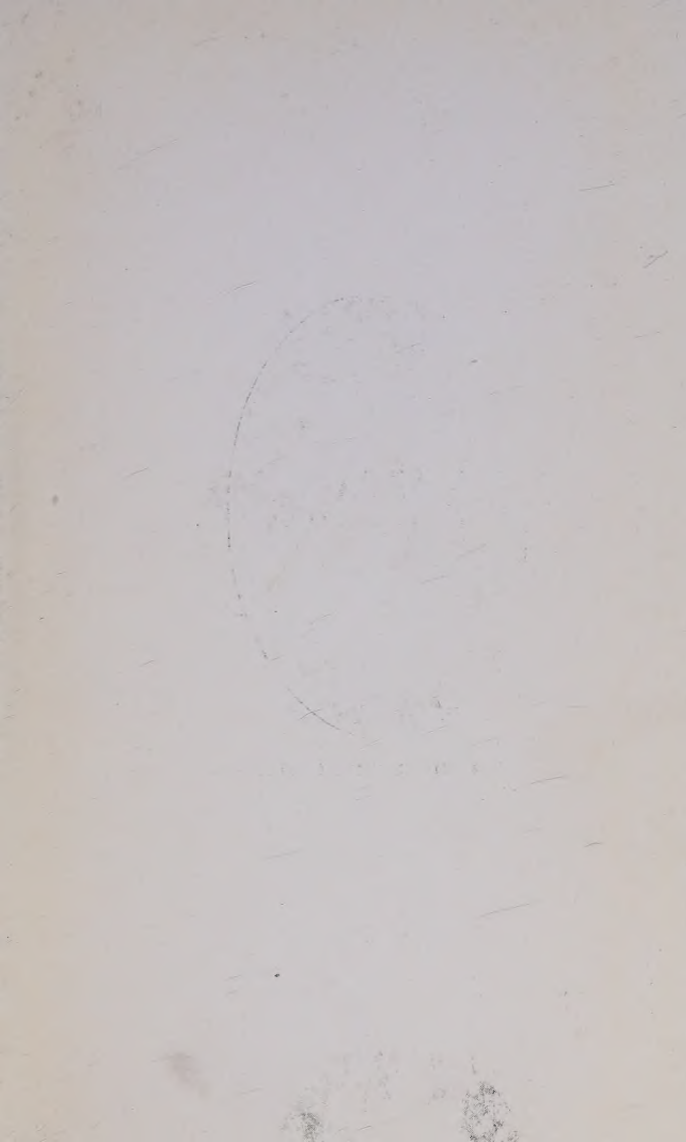
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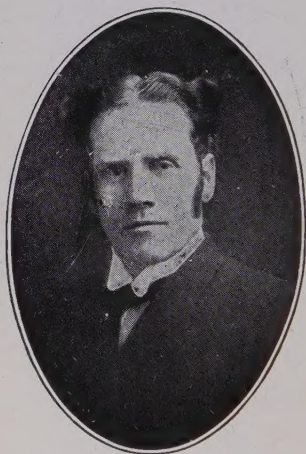
DAVID EUGENE OLSON











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# THE GREATEST TEACHER

by

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## PREFACE

Many kind friends have often urged that I should put in book form my sermon on "THE GREATEST TEACHER." I have always said that I would not begin to write books until after I was at least forty years old. I am now forty-two and therefore yield to these many urgent requests and prayerfully send this little book on its way in hope that it may do someone a great deal of good and many the good I wish to all who read these words of tribute to my Savior.

DAVID EUGENE OLSON.



## TO

My devoted wife, to our children, Lenora, DeLillian and Virgil, to all the teachers, students, officers, directors and friends of the INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN BIBLE COLLEGE and the INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION, and to all who love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, this volume is lovingly dedicated.



# JESUS AS A TEACHER

## INTRODUCTION

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Pilate's question, "What, then, shall I do unto Jesus, who is called Christ?" is the question which comes to every individual from Pilate's time to the judgment day. As a man, Jesus is the wonder and admiration of the world. As a teacher, he is none the less marvelous, being superior to both the teachers and philosophers of all ages. His teaching is perfectly adapted to the different faculties of human nature, whether mental, social, moral, or spiritual. As a master player is able to bring out charming music by skilfully striking the strings of his instrument, so Jesus, the perfect and divine Teacher, was able to touch the chords of man's heart and conscience and bring man's whole being into harmony with the music of heaven. In this booklet the reader will find a delightful presentation of Christ's peerless powers as a teacher of divine truth. The

theme is itself interesting, and the author's treatment of it holds the attention and increases the interest in it to the close. The thoughtful reader will not only be pleased but also profited by reading this booklet which impressively sets forth Jesus as a Teacher. May its perusal be a means of blessing to many thousands who shall have the privilege of reading it and imbibing its great truths.

M. P. HAYDEN, A.M.,  
Dean of the International  
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Minneapolis, Minnesota.

# Jesus as a Teacher

We can learn great lessons from great men; and the greatest lessons from the greatest among men.

From the day when Jesus stood in the holy temple in Jerusalem and astonished the doctors and the scribes with His wisdom, and powerful expressions, until this present moment, the great, the good and the wise, of two thousand years, have, and still, acknowledge Him as the **Greatest Teacher** who has ever stood upon the shores of time.

At His feet have sat Lawyers, Doctors, Judges, Philosophers, Legislators, Governors, Presidents, Kings and Emperors, who have heard Him with great profit and pleasure. Men of all walks of life have been drawn to Him by the millions. And today more people than ever before are eagerly pressing forward to learn of Him. The greatest tributes ever paid to Jesus as a **Teacher** are contributions by the greatest minds.

Napoleon Bonaparte, the mighty Emperor of France, declared: "Ev-

everything in Christ astonishes me, and His will confounds; His spirit overawes me. Between Him and whomever else in the world there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a Being by Himself. His ideas and His sentiments, the truths which He announces, His manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things."

In part he continued by saying: "His doctrines are profound and grapples with the mightiest difficulties and gives the best solutions. Nowhere is to be found such a series of beautiful ideas, and admirable moral axioms which pass before us like the battalions of a celestial army, and which produces in our souls the same emotions which one experiences in contemplating the skies resplendent in a summer night with all the brilliancy of the stars."

It is impossible that the Sacred Personage whose teachings are contained in the Gospels should Himself have been a mere man. "What sweetness, what purity in His man-



ner! What an effective gracefulness in His delivery! Christ speaks and at once generations become His by stricter, closer ties than those of blood."

In John's Gospel, the seventh chapter, we read that a delegation of officers were sent by the Pharisees to take Jesus prisoner, and they, being overpowered by His words returned without Him, declaring that: "No man ever spake like this man."

His words to the woman of Samaria so thrilled her that she left her water pot, ran into the City crying aloud, "Come, and see a Man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?"

Thousands of people followed Him for days and days, being so interested that they refused to eat and sleep rather than take the chance of losing a single word which fell from His gracious lips.

Jesus taught with such power that His words burned in the souls of men like fire. The two on the way to Emmaus exclaimed, "Were

not our hearts burning within us, while He spoke to us in the way, while He opened to us the Scriptures."

Without writing a single book His sayings have set more pens and tongues in motion, than the words of any other being who has ever lived. His words have an influence over the thoughts, tongues and lives of men, which is as wonderful as the stilling of the foaming tempest of the Sea of Galilee, the feeding of the five thousand, or the raising of Lazarus from death and corruption back into life and health.

Words of so-called great men have had their day, but now they lack their former force and power. Twenty centuries have had no such effect on the words of Jesus. More people are moved by them today than in any previous age. The words of Confucius have influenced China, Buddha, India, Mohammed, certain climates. The Gospel of Jesus strikes the keynote wherever it goes and finds a hearty response, and is adapted to the black and the white, those in the South as well as

in the North, East or West. Everywhere men hear Him gladly and are lifted by His teachings to a higher plane, physically, intellectually, socially, politically, morally and spiritually.

In order that we may be mighty and teach mighty lessons in a mighty manner, let us ask, "What are some of the secrets of the Power of Jesus as a Teacher of Men?"

I. As we look into the face of Jesus and hear the wonderful words fall from His Divine lips, we are at once conscious of the fact that we are in the presence of a great personality who deserves our closest attention, and that what He is saying is worth hearing and heeding.

He could stand before His audience truthfully conscious that a greater than Moses, Confucius, or Buddha was here. The truth of this made His hearers feel the authority with which He spoke. When He delivered His Sermon on the Mount, the multitude went away declaring that they were conscious of His authority.

Jesus not only professed to give to the world a divine and heavenly message, but presented a life and work in perfect harmony with such claims. The perfect purity of His life made His audience feel a sacred atmosphere, and even today when His words are read or spoken it seems to us that we are on holy ground.

Jesus had a heavenly love for those whom He was teaching, which drew them to Him and caused them to realize that He was their friend and all He said was for their good.

The world was hungering and thirsting after a word of sympathy from those who were mighty. This need was more than met in Jesus. He taught them tenderness and sympathy with a heart that was touched with troubles, trials and heartaches. He told them of the destruction of Jerusalem with tears streaming down His holy face; He healed their sicknesses with groans proceeding from His heart. Though He knew that Lazarus was only asleep and would come forth to life

at His word, yet Jesus taught them concerning his resurrection weeping while He was speaking. His heart was moved, that is why His words moved the hearts of men. He who would move others must himself be profoundly moved. Jesus had the power of God and the wisdom of God. This power and wisdom influenced His message and made it like its author.

This mighty Teacher did not lose His hold on the people by appearing to be an egotist. No one ever said the startling things about himself that Jesus did. No one ever made such claims, yet it was done from the depths of such honest humility that all thinking men accept His teaching concerning Himself without a thought of egotism. Greatness and modesty, might and humility, were so perfectly blended in this One that He came before His hearers with no repelling or disgusting air. He was a complete Master of Himself. All habits and passions were subject to His will. Though tempted in all things He was "yet without sin." Such won-

derful self-control gave Him controlling power over all His hearers. He who can not control himself need not try to control others. "He that controlleth himself is greater than he that taketh a City," because the first is necessary to the second.

Jesus was the personification of truth, life, light, power, knowledge, wisdom and purity, and all that which He was is seen gleaming forth from every word He uttered. His message pulsates with the life of Him who gave it. His wonderful personality is the first secret to His great power as a Teacher of Men.

The message will be influenced by the messenger. The message will be like the messenger. The message will portray the messenger. The message might be as great as the messenger but no greater. The teachings of Jesus are the greatest among the best and the best among the great, because He was the "Holiest among the mighty and the Mightiest among the holy."

The power and wisdom of his  
word

Came from a soul divinely  
stirred.

II. Not only did Jesus come before His pupils with a great personality, but with a message in perfect keeping with His profession and claim.

Jesus did not simply deal with present and past problems, but drew aside the curtain to the future and opened up subjects which have to do with eternal questions.

He wasted no time discussing passing themes. He held ever before His hearers superlative thoughts for the deepest, widest and highest consideration.

God, Man, Sin, Redemption, Eternal Life, Judgment, Justice, Mercy, Forgiveness, Atonement, Righteousness, Justification, Sanctification, Holiness, Perfection, Retribution, Death, Resurrection, Immortality, Faith, Repentance, Confession, Baptism, Remission, The Church, Good Works, The Work of the Holy Spirit, Heaven, Man's

Eternal Home, and many other sweeping themes of universal interest He handed to us with a key to their understanding.

Theoretical, speculative, theological and unpractical questions found no place in His vocabulary. He only had time for living issues—that which is practical and meets man's needs for time and eternity.

He uttered new truth in an astonishing manner, and old truth in a new light. He had many things to say which the world had never heard before. The soldiers who came to capture Him declared that no one had ever spoken as This One. The Master often quoted what others had said, but more often He spoke from the pure fountain of originality.

Two thousand years have found not one mistake in a single word or statement He ever uttered. Whether referring to the past, present, or future, history and human experience are forced to admit the absolute correctness of all He said which is possible for man to weigh



in the balance of present knowledge.

The wise of all ages have been striving to say excellent things on moral and spiritual questions, but they are all as moonshine to Him, the glorious Sunlight! Moses is recognized by the highest law court in the world (in London, England) as the greatest lawgiver among men who has ever lived. In Matthew, the fifth chapter, Jesus is placed side by side with him and notice the contrast. Moses said excellent things when he spoke the words, "Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." Matth. 5:21. But Jesus said, "Whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgment." Matth. 5:22. The teaching of Moses struggles with the act, while the teaching of Jesus deals with the motive which might lead to the act. If anger is removed from the heart man will never murder. The act may never be committed yet he might be a murderer at heart. In verse 27 Moses says, "Thou shalt not com-

mit adultery," but the Master goes deeper and strikes a death blow at the lust which if fostered will produce the outward crime.

Confucius gave to the world the following rule: "Whatsoever thou would not that men should do to thee do thou not to them." The golden rule given by the Savior is vastly different. He said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." The one is negative, the other is positive; the first deals with the lower nature in man, the second with man's better part. The first restricts action and tries to crush evil with negative prohibition, while the one Jesus gave prompts action and encourages the good in us all. There is as great a difference here as between divinity and humanity, perfection and imperfection, Confucius and Christ.

Among all the moral philosophers and teachers of ethics, the Master so outshines them all, that we, like Peter, James and John "see no one save Jesus only."

Two thousand years with all its improvement and wonderful progress in civilization have not been able to add one thing to the moral teaching which Jesus has given. The master minds of the world to-day acknowledge Him Master in this sphere. Renan said, "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed."

The second secret to the power of Jesus as a Teacher is the weighty and important subject-matter of what He taught.

Let mental and moral philosophy increase, advance and expand, yet beyond that which gleams forth from the teaching of Christ man will never advance. His word is perfect, restoring the soul; sure, making wise the simple; right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightening the eyes; clean, enduring forever; true and righteous altogether.

III. Jesus not only had a great personality behind the great message, but methods of teaching which have never been surpassed.

He always succeeded in putting His teaching in new and interesting light which held His audiences spell bound. In His Sermon on the Mount He repeatedly said, Ye have heard it so and so, but I say unto you.

He put profound and difficult lessons in simple and plain language which all could understand, and yet did not allow His language to fall to a plane where the learned and wise would consider it commonplace.

It was said "the common people heard him gladly," and yet the scientific Greeks "would see Jesus" and Nicodemus came to learn of Him.

Jesus addressed the whole man. When He spoke man's intellect was educated; his sensibilities stirred to love and hatred; His will power led to exert itself to action; and his conscience pricked to condemnation or made to rejoice in approval. Every discourse which Jesus delivered either moved people to be sad, mad or glad.

He preached to people largely in the pronoun of the second person. He made His message personal and vital.

The Master put books in a few words. He knew how to condense and pack a world of truth into a single sentence. One may read the Gospel a thousand times and yet realize that the great depths have not been reached nor the lofty heights scaled.

As spiritual things can best be understood by analogy, Jesus taught by means of parables and apt illustrations. He did not interpret all of them, but gave us the meaning of enough of these to give us a key to the understanding of them all. Jesus did not abruptly tell us the answer to all of the problems He placed before us, but skilfully led us up to the point where we could work out our own solution. He knew that this was the best for the pupil.

"Go tell that fox" is a metaphor used by the great Teacher as a powerful weapon with which to lay

bare the inner nature of King Herod.

Interrogations often found their way into His teachings. He often made His pupils think by asking them questions all through the discourse; "What think ye of the Christ, whose Son is He?" caused the Pharisees to think until their hearts were troubled and perplexed. He sometimes employed interrogations for answers to questions which had been asked Him. See Luke 20:1-8. Jesus knew the power of interrogations in teaching and He knew how and when to use them.

In Matth. 7:21 He made use of antithesis when He said, "Not every one who saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in Heaven."

In Matth. 23:27, 28, Jesus impresses a terrible truth by means of a striking simile, by likening the hypocritical Pharisees to "White-painted sepulchers, which outwardly appear beautiful but inwardly

are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness."

In Matth. 6:34 He shows the folly of anxiety by personifying the word "Morrow" as being anxious for itself.

Jesus often employed paronomasia for the sake of effect as when He said: "Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

Jesus even employed legitimate hyperboles for the sake of emphasis. In Luke 13:33 He said, "for it can not be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Such a statement must have struck its citizens with terrible force considering its history.

In Matth. 6:13 litotes in the expression, "Lead us not into temptation" which means, but deliver us from it without our falling. All implied in the Litotes which He uses.

Jesus used synecdoches, see Luke 12:52; aposiopesis, Luke 19:42; Metonymy, Luke 16:39; Symbols, Matth. 16:19, etc., which shows that

the Master was a Master in His field and understood what words to use in order to make the deepest and most lasting impression.

He hardly ever stopped to prove what He was saying. He had a confidence in truth; and knew what He said was truth, and man would be bound to find it out. He therefore dogmatically hurled out great, sweeping statements which startled the world, but never caused it to feel that He was a dogmatist.

Some have argued that Jesus never made His hearers laugh, but it seems impossible to believe that Jesus could describe the hypocritical Pharisees as "straining a gnat and swallowing a camel," without provoking laughter from that audience. I do believe they laughed as they saw that camel gulped down, hoof, hair, hump and all. And then to see that one who has swallowed the camel stand straining gnats fearing he would choke on an extra large one. That Jesus employed some humor in His teaching is evident more than once.



Some teachers who eliminate the tragedy and sensationalism from their method of instructing would do well to study the Teacher of all teachers, and learn that He was not afraid to use them both, and thereby awaken a responsive chord in human nature.

From Matth. 11:28-30, we learn that Jesus used exhortations in a very powerful manner in persuading men to come to Him.

In His efforts to stir the hearts of those dead in sin, He often gave expression to impassionate speeches in which He both used severe and sympathetic language. In Matth. 23:33 He dared to call those to whom He was speaking, "Serpents, and offspring of vipers," and asked them how they could ever expect to escape hell in their terrible condition. And in Matth. 23:37, His sympathy breaks into a flood of tears. Monotony finds no place in His teachings, they are full of spicy changes of thought, actions and emotions. In one single discourse we have Him giving forth cold logical teaching, then change

suddenly to a storm of severe "woes" and then into a heart burst of loving, tender tears and pleadings, all in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. Ah! He is a Master Teacher, let us learn from Him.

Jesus was careful to say the right thing to the right person. When in the presence of little children, He said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," but when He was in the presence of Nicodemus, He said, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except one is born of the water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God."

He led the minds of those whom He wished to teach up to the unknown by means of the known. See His illustrations from nature.

He adapted His teachings to the times and people and wove in fresh circumstances.

Jesus did not say, "I am the light of the world" until at the Feast of Tabernacles when the great chandelier was lighted which illuminated the whole City of Jerusalem. When all hearts were deeply impressed

with the thought of this great light, Jesus cried out, "I am the light of the world."

When He talked to the farmer He said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while he slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away," etc. This appealed to the farmer. When He spoke to fishermen He likened the Kingdom of Heaven to a net which was full of good and bad fish, and upon this He preached a great sermon which went home to the hearts of all who were fishers. When He called His disciples from the fishers' boats and nets, He said, "Come, and I will make you fishers of men."

When He saw the Shepherds herd their flocks, and care for the little lambs, He said, "I am the Good Shepherd." When He saw a woman mixing three measures of meal, He said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven." As he sat at Jacob's well, He revealed the fact that He had the "water of life" to give. After he had fed the

five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, He delivered the sermon on the Bread of Life, Yes, while the taste of the material bread was still in their mouths, He directed their minds to the "bread which came down from Heaven." It was by the tomb of Lazarus He first announced to a dying world that He was the "Resurrection and the Life," and demonstrated His teaching by His life,—raised Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus never said, "This is my opinion, take it for what it is worth," "This is what I think," "This is what I believe." He never speculated or theorized. He taught with authority. His language was positive, firm, sure, beautiful in its strength. "Verily, verily, I say unto you" is the language He often used. He spoke to men in no uncertain tones. From what He said there was no appeal.

Finally, Jesus taught by example.

He taught us faithfulness by being ever about His "Father's business"; resistance by being "tempted

in all points like as we are, yet without sin"; "industry, by working all day and spending most of the night in prayer; humility, and service by becoming a servant to us all; obedience, by walking sixty miles to be baptized and doing His Father's will unto death; sacrifice, by becoming poor, "that we through His poverty might become rich"; love, by suffering in our place; patience, by enduring the cross without complaints; forgiveness, by praying for those who cruelly treated Him; He taught us living by living, giving, by giving, dying, by dying, and the resurrection by rising from the dead; and the way from earth to Heaven by treading the path before us, and leaving His footprints for us to follow all along the way.

Oh! Thou Teacher come from God, All nature sing to Thee.

When I sit down by my table, I remember Thou art the bread of life; when I go out into the garden and see the roses and the lilies, I remember Thou art the "Rose of Sharon," and the "Lily of the Valley," "the fairest of ten thousand"

to millions of the human race; when I go out and see the clear crystal fountain gushing forth and flowing on to refresh the earth, I remember Thee, who art the "Fountain broken open in the house of David which cleanses from all sin"; when I see the rock on which the eagles build their nests, under which the Shepherds hide their flocks, I think of Thee, the "Rock of Ages"; when the sun has set and the shades of night around me gather and many stars are dimly shining, my eyes are fixed on Thee, the "bright and morning star" Who ever outshines all others.

When I walk down the dusty way of life, I remember that Thou art the Way, the Truth and the Life.

As the sun of Righteousness He illumines the world with His truth. As the bright and Morning Star He shines above the brightness of all other teachers. As the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon His words give forth a fragrance which fills the world with the sweetest perfume. As the Fountain broken open in the house of David, His

promises flow on from generation to generation refreshing the dry soil of our hearts. As the Rock of Ages His word remains the same, unchangeable and immovable truth on which we may build for time and eternity. As the "Lion of Judah" He thunders forth His Gospel, awakening the slumbering consciences of men, drives away the beasts of error, and steps into the arena of religious thought and speech, and occupies the supreme and all conspicuous position. More so now than ever. All other teachers are being hushed in His majestic presence, and tremble with holy reverence at the sound of His heavenly voice, which echoes and re-echoes down the mountain gorges of time, the music reverberating from hill to hill, from sea to sea, and from pole to pole, until every one shall hear His divine call to a higher life, as revealed in His Gospel.

As a King He speaks with power which must be heeded. As a Prophet He instructs with wisdom which must appeal to all thinking men.

As a Priest He pleads in tenderness and loving sympathy which none but a dead man can resist. As the Way, the Truth, and the Life, He guides man to a knowledge of God, man, earth, Himself, duty, life, death and destiny. As the Bread of Life He feeds the soul on the Manna from heaven—His word—which is Spirit and Life. As the “Resurrection and the Life” He speaks to us the word which is quick and active and which resurrects the spirit dead in trespass and sin. Changes a man eating “Tcakainbau” to a loving Christian king, the reveling cannibal feast to a feast of love around His own table. A Saul of Tarsus to the great Apostle Paul.

Oh! Master, may we sit at Thy feet through all eternity to learn of Thee!

In the midst of sin and religious confusion, when men and churches are divided over human creeds, doctrines of men, and false teachers, I see but one solution to it all; and the answers come from the very



throne of God in tones of love yet terrifying thunder.

**“THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN  
WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED;  
HEAR YE HIM!”**

1. The Messenger is divine!  
Therefore hear it.
2. The Message is from heaven!  
Therefore hear it.
3. His methods of teaching are  
from God and unsurpassed.  
Hear Him! Oh! Ye ends of the  
earth, Hear and Live!







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